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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [FR](#) [NATO](#) [OSCE](#)

SUBJECT: EUR/RPM DIRECTOR CONSULTATIONS -- FRENCH CONCERNS
RE NATO RESPONSE FORCE AND NATO FUNDING; AGREEMENT ON OSCE

REF: PARIS 6125

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, Reason 1
.4 B/D

11. (C) Summary: French MFA and MOD NATO experts told EUR/RPM Director Jim Warlick that closer cooperation with the U.S. was needed in order to resolve issues at NATO before they were turned over to the Military Committee. The French welcomed U.S. efforts to expand our transatlantic dialog, as expanded on by the EUR/RPM Director. They expressed understanding that NATO was the instrument of choice for the U.S., but cautioned that the EU should be viewed as an important partner in its own right by the U.S. and not just another framework, among others, for discussion. For better or worse, the EU was the framework for its members to reach unified decisions. On NATO transformation goals, the French emphasized their continued support for interoperability of forces and NATO's crisis response capabilities. They stated that the NATO Response Force (NRF) should handle "high-end" operations rather than stabilization and reconstruction. Additionally, NATO must not lose sight of the NRF's intended purpose and not use it to cover force planning gaps. The Alliance also needs to better integrate costs of operations in NATO planning.

12. (C) On OSCE issues, the discussion centered on ways to address Russia's role within the organization, with France in favor of giving Russia appropriate political gestures in recognition of its concerns as a means of increasing Russian engagement. On the potential OSCE chairmanship of Kazakhstan, the French shared USG concerns, but said no unified position existed among EU members. End Summary.

The EU and Transatlantic Dialog

13. (C) On September 14, EUR/RPM Director Warlick called on MFA DAS-equivalent director for NATO issues Francois Carrel-Billiard and his MOD counterpart Colonel Antoine Creux. At the beginning of the meeting, A/S-equivalent Director for Strategic Affairs Philippe Carre dropped by briefly to reiterate his request (made reftel to EUR A/S Dan Fried) for closer consultations with the U.S., especially at NATO. Carre noted both sides are not always in agreement, but that he looked forward to discussion and resolution of issues through early and informal consultations in order to avoid difficult debates at the Military Committee. Carre again expressed appreciation for A/S Fried's presentation on U.S. efforts to promote a better transatlantic dialog (reftel).

14. (C) Carrel-Billiard expressed support for closer consultations with the U.S. and noted that all sides needed to define issues and priorities before turning to discussions on institutional roles. He cautioned, however, that the EU should not be seen as just another optional framework for dialog. France understood that NATO was the instrument of choice for the U.S., given our common membership in the organization, but we should not lose sight of the EU as a major partner. The EU, he added, provides the single framework for sovereign states to share competencies, take decisions affecting the internal affairs of member states, and reach decisions on Europe.

NATO Transformation and the NRF

15. (C) On specific issues, Creux turned to upcoming NATO summit planning and transformation goals. He expressed concern over the inadequate state of readiness of some NATO members, adding that all members should be prepared to act when necessary and ought to develop a full range of capabilities. NATO members need to focus on preparing for future crises and not to count on others to operate as ad hoc coalitions. The question is how to help new members to do more, he mused. Carrel-Billiard expanded on Creux's comments by saying that, for France, one of NATO's major functions was to deploy forces, hence, the importance of interoperability efforts. The NATO Response Force (NRF), he recalled, allowed NATO members to act together; it is a means for members to cooperate on specific missions. Carrel-Billiard then expressed a French concern that NATO is losing its ability to take on "high-end jobs," and that it risks diluting its focus through stabilization operations, such as the past proposal

to use the NRF for election monitoring in Afghanistan. Additionally, NATO must not be misperceived as a tool for the ready disposition of SACEUR, but rather the latter should be prepared to request the NRF only when it is truly needed. To further explain French sensitivities, Carrel-Billiard recounted that initial French support for the NRF had been achieved with difficulty, as the French feel strongly that France must retain national control of its forces. The French President, however, had made the political decision to support the NRF. Any agreement to join a NATO decision to use the NRF would require explicit GOF approval. NATO must take care to avoid using the NRF inappropriately to meet political agendas not collectively shared, Creux added.

Concerns re Rising Costs, Afghanistan and Iraq

16. (C) Carrel-Billiard said France is also worried about the potential for growth in the number of NATO operations and the adverse impact that their higher costs would have on funding for transformation and modernization goals. Additionally, he expressed concern that common funding could be viewed as a technical fix in cases where there was insufficient force generation. France accepts common funding for support functions in Afghanistan, for instance, but cannot readily accept major increases in common funds, as this would impose an additional financial hardship on those members already financing national deployments (France has a significant number of such deployments overseas). NATO must take care to better assess the financial implications of common decisions, Creux noted. Carrel-Billiard stated that these French comments were only intended to highlight the necessity of formulating "realistic agendas." In a related vein, he said NATO must be mindful of the potential costs of NATO partnerships. Citing Afghanistan as an example, he said the alliance must avoid turning NATO commitments into expensive assistance/development programs beyond its scope. Warlick took the opportunity to explain the importance of an expanded NATO role in Iraq for our coalition members. A NATO umbrella would prove useful to some as they seek to maintain a contribution to coalition efforts in Iraq, he noted. Neither Carrel-Billiard nor Creux voiced any specific reaction.

OSCE and Russia

17. (C) Warlick met separately with the MFA's Deputy Director for Strategic Affairs Paul Dahan to discuss OSCE issues. The discussion centered on ways to address Russia's involvement within the organization. Dahan said France was in favor of giving Russia appropriate political "gestures" in recognition of Russian concerns, for instance on election monitoring and scales of assessment, but that anything else was a nonstarter, given the GOF belief that the OSCE was functioning well and that Russian proposals would serve only to weaken the organization. Dahan added that France and Russia met twice yearly in working groups to address the OSCE under the auspices of the twice-yearly meetings of foreign and defense ministers. On the potential chairmanship of Kazakhstan, Dahan said the GOF shared USG concerns, but that no unified position existed yet among EU members. President Chirac's planned visit to Kazakhstan in the fall had been cancelled as a result of his recent illness. Dahan expressed a hope that the USG would not insist on a highly critical reference to Russia's Istanbul commitments during the December OSCE ministerial. The GOF believes it necessary to moderate any reference to Istanbul commitments with an acknowledgment of progress made.

18. (U) EUR/RPM Director James Warlick did not have the opportunity to clear this message.

STAPLETON